THE CAMBRIDGE STATISTICS DISCUSSION GROUP

Wednesday 11th March 2026 7:15 for 7:45

Large Lecture Theatre,
MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit,
Chaucer Road, Cambridge, CB2 7EF

How can the pedagogy of statistics inform the teaching of machine learning?

Paul Fannon
Department of Genetics: Bioinformatics Training Facility

Abstract: There is a large interest from students in courses on Machine Learning, but the pedagogy of this material is much less established than traditional statistical courses. This talk will discuss where machine learning might be placed in comparison to traditional statistics, and whether it should be taught in the same way as traditional statistics or seen as an entirely separate topic.

Speaker: Paul Fannon first joined Christ's as an undergraduate back in 1998, studying Natural Sciences. After teaching in schools for many years, he was drawn back to academia through educational research. His main interests are the development of thinking skills in mathematics and statistical modeling in educational research. He has looked at the transition from school-level mathematics to undergraduate mathematics. Paul helped develop the new A-level mathematics curriculum and has been involved with writing several textbooks. He is currently Chief Examiner for the International Baccalaureate where he helped develop their new Applications and Interpretations Mathematics course.
Paul has been a Fellow of the Institute for Mathematics and its Applications since 2020 as well as taking on various roles across the University regarding outreach and widening participation. One of his favourite projects has been leading the science strand of the Christ's-King's Bridging Course which aims to help students from non-standard backgrounds flourish as they move from school to university. His main passion is teaching, and he has won the CUSU Student-Led Teaching Awards for undergraduate supervision in 2018 and 2020.

Directions (From Central Cambridge) Chaucer Road is off Trumpington Road – if you are heading away from the city centre it is the first right after the junction with Brooklands Avenue. Number 15 is at the end on the left and is a large Victorian House with a more modern extension to its right. The entrance is in the porch located in the middle of the older section on the left as you come in and is accessed by ascending a few steps from the car park. Cars may be parked there. Note due to building work please enter and leave car park via the 'OUT' entrance (the second of the two entrances on the left as you go down Chaucer Road). The outside door will be locked at 7:45.
Arrivals after 7:45pm can gain admittance by contacting the secretary on 07761769436. A map showing the location of the unit is at http://www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/contact-us.

Provisional Next Meetings:
April – Daniela De Angelis (Biostatistics) on 'Real-time nowcasting and forecasting of COVID-19 dynamics in England'.
April or May – Alice Hutchings (Computer Laboratory) on 'Challenges in Cybersecurity'.

Supper: Some members eat regularly in Wetherspoons (St Andrew's Street) before each meeting **at 5-15pm**.All welcome !
Subscriptions: of 1 pound are now due for attending the 2025-2026 session.
Secretary: Peter Watson, MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, 15 Chaucer Road, Cambridge CB2 7EF;
telephone 01223 769479; E-mail peter.watson@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk.

Slides and .mp3 files of old talks: http://www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/people/peter.watson/csdg.html
Permanent archive at https://archive.org/details/@peter_c_watson